

Testimony to the CGA Shoreline Presentation Task Force Monday July 23, 2012

My name is DONALD WATSON, resident and business owner based in Trumbull CT, and public member of the Trumbull CT Conservation Commission, and also a member of the six-town Conservation Technical Advisory Committee of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council. I am author of the 2011 book *Design for Flooding*, and a Subject Matter Expert (SME) for a FEMA-funded project to provide certification and educational curriculum for design professionals.

STATEMENTS OF FACT

- The measures to be considered for Sea Level Rise are not different than those measures that a coastal community would consider to prepare for extreme flooding hazards of hurricane, tropical storm, surge and inundation. Of these, storm surge is the most destructive of property and threat to life safety. Very often, coastal and inland flooding occur in the same event.
- While storm surge along the Connecticut coast may seem to be buffered by Long Island, that is not entirely the case: Storm surge from a large hurricane that impacts the outer coast of Long Island and Rhode Island would result in a surge that would enter Long Island Sound from its two ends, like a pool filling from both ends.
- While New York and Connecticut communities have been spared the scale of destruction hurricane and flooding since the 1938 New England Hurricane, Hurricane Irene was a "near miss," and the Nor'Easter that hit the Pawtuxit River RI and particularly Warwick RI in March 2010 broke all recent records, and was called a "500-year storm."

ACCORDINGLY

- **Flood mitigation planning integrated with Comprehensive Plans.** Each of these flood prone communities should have a **flood mitigation plan**. Mitigation plans, when they do exist are often spotty, executed without public involvement and often only minimally completed to meet regulatory reporting requirements. Mitigation planning should be made part of a community Comprehensive Plans of Conservation and Development to assure that it's recommendations have full legal standing broad public involvement, and full notice and consideration with land planning decisions.
- **A cadre of qualified personnel.** Each coastal community (as well as neighboring flood-prone communities inland and along Connecticut's significant watersheds) should have at least one designated staff who is trained and qualified to serve as a **Certified Flood Manager**, meeting standards of the Association of State Flood Plain Managers. (The National Conference of ASFPM will be in Hartford CT in June 2013.)
- **Economics and FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS).** Economic incentives and advantages are to be found in developing a full mitigation plan as part of Comprehensive Plan is to achieve the **highest possible rating in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS)**. That is, with full development of proactive steps to mitigate flooding, all property owners within floodprone areas can possible qualify for lower insurance rates. Many measures of flood mitigation that are low cost and other benefits: protection of wetlands, planting trees and vegetated landscape buffers along streams, rivers and coastal plains, maintaining stormwater culverts, and increasing water-holding capacities of reservoirs and catchment areas.
- **Emergency Preparedness.** Such plans should obviously have full involvement and coordination with a municipality's Emergency Preparedness officials. A major finding of current research is that to meet a reasonable standard of preparedness is to have updated and rigorously maintained Flood Mitigation Plan, as part of comprehensive community planning and emergency management.